

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 217  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
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E. O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PGOV PINT IS EG XF  
SUBJ: KNESSET APPROVES BEGIN'S PEACE PLAN

1. SUMMARY: BY A COMFORTABLE, THOUGH LESS THAN EXPECTED, MAJORITY THE KNESSET APPROVED BEGIN'S PEACE PLAN. THE VOTE FOLLOWED A DEBATE OF ELEVEN AND A HALF HOURS WITH SOME 50 SPEAKERS. BEGIN LED OFF WITH DETAILS OF HIS PLAN FOR THE WEST BANK AND HIS SINAI PROPOSALS. PERES FOLLOWED, APPLAUDING BEGIN'S FLEXIBILITY BUT CRITICIZING SEVERAL PROVISIONS OF THE PLAN. THEN CAME MANY SHORT SPEECHES WHICH WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS GENERALLY SUPPORTED BEGIN. IN HIS ADDRESS DAYAN STRESSED THE PERMANENCE OF THE PROPOSED WEST BANK ARRANGEMENTS AND THE IDF'S ROLE IN ENFORCING THEM. BEGIN'S REBUTTAL WAS GENERALLY AIMED AT HIS CRITICS ON THE RIGHT, WHILE HE NOTED  
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EGYPT'S INTEREST IN FURTHER TALKS AND CALLED ATTENTION TO NEW INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL'S POSITIONS.

2. THE LARGE NUMBER OF ABSTAINERS WAS PRIMARILY DUE TO THE ALIGNMENT'S ABSTENTION, WHICH TO SOME DEGREE RESULTED FROM ANNOYANCE WITH DAYAN. THERE WAS GENERAL UNEASINESS OVER THE PROPOSALS AMONG MANY MKS. THEIR CONCERN CENTERED ON A SEPARATE

STATE ARISING ON THE WEST BANK, THE FATE OF SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND BEGIN'S NEGOTIATING STRATEGY. WHILE ONE MK SPOKE PRIVATELY OF NEW SETTLEMENTS PLANNED ON THE WEST BANK AND SINAI, THE GUSH EMUNIM DEMONSTRATED AND LOBBIED AT THE KNESSET. END SUMMARY

3. AT THE CONCLUSION OF A MARATHON 11 1/2 HOUR SESSION MARKED BY A RECORD NUMBER OF PEECHES, THE KNESSET TONIGHT APPROVED PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S PEACE PROPOSALS BY A VOTE OF 64 TO 8 WITH 40 ABSTENTIONS. BEGIN OPENED THE DEBATE WITH A STRAIGHT-FORWARD PRESENTATION OF THE PROPOSED AGREEMENT, DETAILING THE STRUCTURE AND TIMETABLE FOR AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATION OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. THE PRIME MINISTER EMPHASIZED THE CONTINUING ROLE OF THE IDF IN THESE TERRITORIES. THE ISRAELI CLAIM TO SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE WEST BANK AND GAZA HAS NOT BEEN WITHDRAWN, BUT IN THE FACE OF CONFLICTING CLAIMS - AND THE EGYPTIAN POSITION - THE QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY REMAINS OPEN. THE PRINCIPLES GOVERNING A SINAI SETTLEMENT WERE LAID OUT, INCLUDING DEMILITARIZATION, THINNING OUT OF FORCES, AND PHASING OUT OF THE IDF. THE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS WILL BE PROTECTED BY AN "ISRAELI FORCE" (NOT NECESSARILY THE IDF), AND FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION THROUGH THE STRAIGHTS OF TIRAN WILL BE GUARANTEED.

4. BEGIN DESCRIBED THE FAVORABLE U.S. AND BRITISH REACTIONS TO HIS PROPOSALS DURING HIS VISITS TO WASHINGTON AND LONDON, AND NOTED THE ROLE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE IN ARRANGING THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ISMAILYIA TALKS. HE TERMED THESE TALKS A SUCCESS, AS THEY ASSURED THE CONTINUATION OF NEGOTIATIONS TOWARDS A PEACE TREATY. WHILE HE REGRETTED SPLITTING WITH OLD FRIENDS OVER THIS ISSUE AND WAS AWARE OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND RISKS INVOLVED, HE WAS CERTAIN THAT THIS WAS THE ONLY CREDIBLE PEACE PROPOSAL. IT SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD AS A FINAL POSITION: IT IS NOW THE TURN OF THE OTHER SIDE TO RESPOND.

5. WHILE CAREFULLY AVOIDING CRITICISM OF SADAT, BEGIN WARNED "CONVENTIONAL THINKERS" IN THE EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT THEY ARE IN ERROR IF THEY FORSEE INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE FORCING A CHANGE IN THE ISRAELI POSITION. ON THE CONTRARY, ISRAEL'S STANCE ENJOYS ENORMOUS SUPPORT IN THE U.S. BEGIN CONCLUDED WITH A FURTHER EXPRESSION OF ISRAEL'S SINCERE AND STEADFAST DETERMINATION TO FOLLOW THE PATH TO A PEACE SETTLEMENT.

6. MK SHIMON PERES, SPEAKING FOR THE OPPOSITION, PRAISED BEGIN'S READINESS TO NEGOTIATE AND FLEXIBILITY IN ABANDONING ENTRENCHED IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS. HE RESERVED HIS CRITICISM FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S INATTENTION TO TWO VITAL CONSIDERATIONS: ISRAEL'S JEWISH CHARACTER (UNDERMINED BY THE WEST BANK/

GAZA AUTONOMY SCHEME), AND THE NEED TO PRESERVE ISRAEL'S  
"INDEPENDENCE OF SECURITY," I.E. ABILITY TO DEFEND ITSELF,  
AS OPPOSED TO MERE INDEPENDENCE. COMPROMISE IS A PART OF  
THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, HE SAID, AND IS NOT TO BE OPPOSED  
ON PRINCIPLE. BUT THERE CANNOT BE ANY COMPROMISE ON THE  
QUESTION OF A SEPARATE PALESTINIAN STATE. UNFORTUNATELY,  
HOWEVER, THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT THE WEST BANK AUTONOMY PLAN IS.  
FINALLY, PERES FAULTED THE GOVERNMENT FOR MOVING TOO FAR  
ON THE SINAI. MINOR TERRITORIAL CHANGES ARE NECESSARY AND  
WOULD HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED THROUGH MORE ASTUTE BARGAINING.

7. IN THE ONLY STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OTHER  
THAN THOSE MADE BY BEGIN HIMSELF - IN WHICH HE COUNTERED RUMORS  
OF A RIFT WITH THE PRIME MINISTER - MOSHE DAYAN EXPRESSED HIS  
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CERTITUDE THAT EGYPT SINCERELY WISHES TO CONTINUE AND CON-  
CLUDE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A PEACE TREATY. THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE

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O R 290108Z DEC 77  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 218  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
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BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE DIFFICULT BECAUSE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES ARE BASIC. NEVERTHELESS, AND IN SPITE OF STRONG OPPOSITION IN THE ARAB WORLD, SADAT IS ABLE TO GO FORWARD WITH THE NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE OF THE BASIC ACCEPTABILITY OF ISRAEL'S PROPOSALS. WHILE MUCH HAS CHANGED IN RECENT WEEKS, EGYPT IS STEADFAST IN HER REFUSAL TO CONSIDER ANY CHANGE IN THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY. NOR CAN IT BE EXPECTED THAT SHE WILL BE PRESSURED TO DO SO BY THE U.S. THE SINAI ARRANGEMENT, INCLUDING SPECIAL STATUS FOR THE JEWISH SETTLEMENTS, IS THE MAXIMUM THAT CAN BE EXPECTED FROM AN ISOLATED EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT.

8. DAYAN EMPHASIZED THAT THE WEST BANK/GAZA PROPOSED SETTLEMENT IS A PERMANENT ONE; IT ENABLES ISRAEL TO RETAIN ITS RIGHT TO ITS HOMELAND, WHILE TERMINATING ITS ROLE AS AN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OCCUPYING POWER. BOTH ISRAEL AND EGYPT, HE SAID, WOULD WELCOME DISCUSSIONS WITH JORDAN OVER THE PROPOSED STATUS OF THESE TERRITORIES. ISRAELI CITIZENSHIP IS OFFERED, IN ADDITION TO JORDANIAN, IN ORDER TO PREVENT THE ADOPTION OF A THIRD, PALESTINIAN CITIZENSHIP. FEARS OF MASSIVE ARAB PURCHASES OF ISRAELI LAND ARE GROUNDLESS; 92 PERCENT OF ISRAEL'S LAND IS UNDER THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ISRAEL LANDS AUTHORITY. IN ANY CASE, DAYAN SAID, THE IDF WILL BE IN PLACE TO ENFORCE ANY OF THE PROPOSED PROVISIONS.

9. IN HIS REBUTTAL DELIVERED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE DEBATE, BEGIN WAS TYPICALLY AT HIS BEST. HE ANSWERED CRITICISM FROM THE RIGHT WING OF HIS OWN PARTY AND FROM GUSH EMUNIM. HE NOTED THAT WHILE SADAT'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM WAS IN ITSELF A SURPRISE, THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE NOT: THEY HAD BEEN ASSIDUOUSLY CULTIVATED IN THE PRECEDING MONTHS DURING VISITS TO THE U.S. AND ROMANIA. AS A RESULT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ISRAEL IS NO LONGER ISOLATED, BUT IS CONJOINED IN A PEACE PROCESS WITH THE U.S., EUROPE, AND THE MODERATE ARAB WORLD, NOW, THE EAST HAS BEEN ISOLATED. BEGIN NOTED THAT ON TWO POINTS - THE ACQUISITION OF TERRITORY BY FORCE AND THE PALESTINIAN/ISRAELI ARAB QUESTION - THE ISMAILYA TALKS COULD HAVE FOUNDERED. THE GOOD WILL AND DETERMINATION OF BOTH SIDES PREVENTED THIS.

10. FINALLY, ISRAEL NEVER WANTED TO BECOME A SECOND RHODESIA, AND BY OFFERING FULL, EQUAL RIGHTS OF CITIZENSHIP TO JEWS AND ARABS ALIKE SHE WILL NOT BECOME ONE. SELF-ADMINISTRATION WILL FOR THE FIRST TIME BE A REALITY FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. THIS, HE STRESSED, IS A PERMANENT SETTLEMENT OF THE ISRAELI ARAB ISSUE.

11. THE VOTE FOR THE GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION WAS SIGNIFICANTLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LESS THAN EXPECTED. THE DIFFERENCE WAS THE SURPRISINGLY LARGE NUMBER OF ABSTENTIONS. THEY INCLUDED THREE NRP VOTES (BEN-MEIR, AVTEBI, AND STERN-KATTAN), SHELLI AND THE ENTIRE ALIGNMENT CONTINGENT AS A SOLID BLOC. THE UNANIMITY OF THE ALIGNMENT VOTE WAS PARTICULARLY UNEXPECTED IN VIEW OF THE DECISION TO WAIVE PARTY DISCIPLINE FOR ALIGNMENT MKS ON THIS VOTE. SEVERAL LABOR PARTY DOVES (EBAN, SARRID, BAR-AM, HACOEN PLUS SHULAMIT ALONI OF THE CITIZENS RIGHTS MOVEMENT) ACCORDING TO SARRID AND ALONI SWITCHED DURING DAYAN'S SPEECH FROM A DECISION TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT TO ABSTAINING. (DAYAN, WHO HAS NOT BEEN FORGIVEN IN THE ALIGNMENT FOR HIS DEFECTION TO THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT, AT ONE POINT LOST HIS COOL DURING SUSTAINED HECKLING AND RETORTED "THE ARMED FORCES" WHEN MK'S INTERRUPTED HIS SPEECH DEMANDING TO KNOW WHO WOULD ENFORCE THE PLAN'S PROVISIONS ON THE WEST BANK. AT THE CONCLUSION OF DAYAN'S SPEECH ONE MK SHOUTED, "ONLY DAYAN CAN UNITE THE ALIGNMENT".)

12. IT WAS EVIDENT FROM THE SPEECHES THAT FOLLOWED ONE ANOTHER IN RECORD NUMBER THAT THE MAJOR CONCERNS WERE: (A) SELF-RULE ON THE WEST BANK LEADING TO AN INDEPENDENT STATE; (B) THE FATE OF THE SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES; AND (C) BEGIN'S QUESTIONABLE NEGOTIATING STRATEGY OF YIELDING ALL IN THE SINAI BEFORE BARGAINING HAD BEGUN. OPINIONS ON BEGIN'S PROPOSALS HAD LITTLE RELATION TO PARTY AFFILIATION. FOR EXAMPLE, DMC MK AKIVA NOFI WAS INTERRUPTED WHEN A PARTY COLLEAGUE SHOUTED "YOU DON'T SPEAK FOR THE DMC" AT A POINT IN HIS SPEECH WHERE HE EXPRESSED RESERVATION TO BEGIN'S CONCESSIONS IN SINAI. IN CORRIDOR CONVERSATION WITH MKS WE DETECTED AN AIR OF UNEASINESS AMONG MANY AND A GENERAL ABSENCE OF ENTHUSIASM FOR BEGIN'S PROPOSALS. WHILE BEGIN HAD WIDE SUPPORT (PERHAPS GREATER THAN THE MANY ABSTENTIONS IN THE FINAL VOTE WOULD INDICATE), IT WAS PAPER THIN. LA'AM MK EHUD OLMERT, WHO CLAIMS THAT HE STANDS AMONG THE LIKUD'S MODERATES AND IS A REGULAR AMONG BEGIN'S SUPPORTERS, TOLD US THAT MANY LIKUDNIKS, EVEN AMONG THE MINISTERS, WERE HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS. HE STRESSED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACTION NEA-10

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THAT BEGIN'S PLAN WAS NOT MERELY AN OPENING BARGAINING PLOY  
BUT HIS FINAL POSITION. "BEGIN IS NOT TRADING IN AN ORIENTAL  
BAZZAR." HE WILL NOT COMPROMISE FURTHER. LABOR MK DANNY  
ROSOLIO EXPRESSED FEAR THAT A WEST BANK STATE WOULD INEVITABLY  
EVOLVE FROM BEGIN'S PLAN OF SELF-RULE. ON THE OTHER HAND,  
YOSSI SARRID TENDED TO FAVOR THE PLAN FOR THAT VERY REASON.

13. HERUT MK YOSEF ROM CONFIDED THAT HE WAS UNHAPPY OVER BEGIN'S  
CONCESSION IN SINAI AND TOLD US THAT THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS  
NOT ONLY TO MAINTAIN ALL SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRI-  
TORIES BUT TO FOUND NEW ONES IN THE RAFFAH APPROACHES AS  
WELL AS IN THE WEST BANK. WE HEARD FROM SEVERAL SOURCES THAT  
AGRICULTURE MINISTER SHARON INTENDS TO PUSH THROUGH A PLAN  
FOR INCREASED SETTLEMENT IN SINAI BEFORE ANY PULLBACK.

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14. SUCH TALK, HOWEVER, DID LITTLE TO MOLLIFY THE CONCERNS OF  
THE GUSH EMUNIM AND THE SETTLERS IN SINAI. WHILE MANY DEMON-

STRATED OUTSIDE THE KNESSET, SEVERAL WERE LOBBYING INSIDE THE BUILDING. GUSH LEADERS PORAT AND SHOFAT FINALLY GOT A PRIVATE MEETING WITH BEGIN IN A KNESSET OFFICE. BEGIN WAS HEARD TO SHOUT, "WHO SAYS I'M TRYING FOR THE NOBEL PRIZE."

15. TO SUM UP, KNESSET SUPPORT FOR BEGIN'S POSITION PROVED TO BE BROAD BUT NOT DEEP. WHILE MOST WELCOMED THE SADAT INITIATIVE AND FAVORED CONTINUATION OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, MANY - EVEN THOSE VOTING IN FAVOR - HAD SERIOUS RESERVATIONS OVER THE EXTENT OF THE INITIAL CONCESSIONS. THE ALIGNMENT'S CONCERN OVER WHAT IT REGARDS AS THE INEVITABLE EVOLUTION OF AN AUTONOMOUS WEST BANK AND GAZA INTO A PALESTINIAN STATE IS THE MOST SERIOUS FOCUS OF OPPOSITION. LEWIS

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